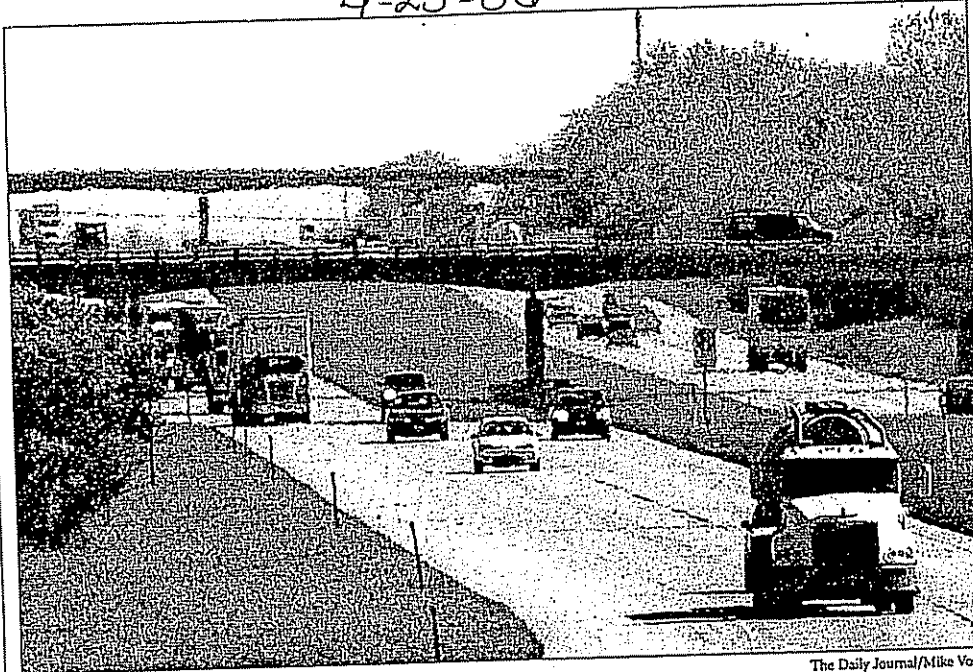


4-25-06



The Daily Journal/Mike Voss

Looking south on Interstate 57, traffic passes under the 6000N Road overpass Monday afternoon. The county road is being slated as the site of a new interchange and has received conceptual approval from the Federal Highway Administration.

Right direction

Feds give preliminary OK to new I-57 interchange

By Scott Boehmer

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Federal officials have given the thumbs up to plans for a proposed new Interstate 57 interchange at 6000N Road.

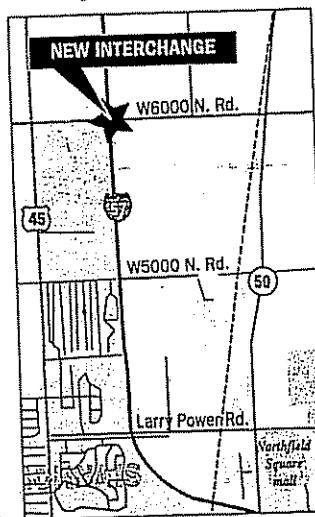
Kankakee County officials and Bradley Mayor Gael Kent announced Monday that the long-discussed interchange has received conceptual approval from the Federal Highway Administration.

"From the beginning of the process all the communities, all the municipalities, in the county have been in support of this location," said Kankakee County planner Mike Van Mill. "That has helped get this thing through to where we are today."

Even with the OK, construction won't be starting anytime soon. Kankakee County engineer Jim Piekarczyk said two engineering studies are required before building can begin, and that work is not expected to be completed until at least 2011.

Kent said the new interchange will benefit commuters as well as help the development of the area.

"I think this is exceptionally good



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news not only for Bourbonnais Township and Manteno Township but for the entire county because I think it points to the fact growth is here," Kent said.

Bradley, Bourbonnais, Manteno and the county are cooperating on a

plan that will look at the area near the interchange and come up with a unified plan for how it should be developed, Van Mill said.

All four corners of the proposed interchange are within the corporate boundaries of Bourbonnais. As part of a March 2003 agreement with Manteno, the villages will share equally the net portion of sales tax from 34 acres at the northeast corner of I-57 and 6000N Road and 40 acres on the northwest corner.

Gaining preliminary approval for the interchange allows engineering work to begin moving forward, Piekarczyk said. Funding is already available for the first phase of that work, which could begin late this year, he said.

Without being granted the preliminary approval from the federal government, "we would have gone back to zero," Van Mill said.

County officials began working on planning for the interchange seven years ago, Van Mill said. Kankakee County transportation planner Mike Lammey said he did not have any reliable cost estimates on how much an interchange might cost. Officials have previously placed the price tag at around \$60 million.